

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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O 012240Z AUG 73
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3075

CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 5642

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AR
SUBJ: EMBASSY MEMORANDA CONTROVERSY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 5635; BUENOS AIRES 5641

1. SUMMARY: EFFORTS REPORTED UNDERWAY TO HAVE CHARGE
DECLARED PNG. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY SUGGESTS DEPT CALL IN
ARGENTINE CHARGE. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTERNOON PRESS REPORTS SEVERAL CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTIES HAVE
PROPOSED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE AS TO
WHETHER THE TIME HAS NOT ARRIVED FOR DECLARING ME PERSONA
NON GRATA AS CONSEQUENCE OF EMBASSY MEMORANDA ON PROPOSED
ECONOMIC LEGISLATION. EMBASSY CONTACTS ARE ALSO PICKING UP
REPORTS OF POSSIBILITY OF SUCH ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE.

3. APART FROM ANY PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS, IT IS A MATTER OF
DEEP CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OF U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS THAT UP
TO THIS TIME GOA HAS TAKEN NO ACTION TO KEEP MATTER IN PROPER
PERSPECTIVE. PRESS RELEASE BY FOREIGN OFFICE TODAY, REPEATED
BY PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE (BA-5635), CERTAINLY NOT CALCULATED
TO KEEP MATTER FROM HAVING FURTHER REPERCUSSIONS. DEPARTMENT
WILL HAVE NOTED THAT THE RELEASE DOES NOT INCLUDE STATEMENT
TO ME BY FOREIGN MINISTER ON JULY 26 THAT GOA CONSIDERED
MATTER TERMINATED WITH HIS ADMONISHMENT, ALTHOUGH SAME STATEMENT
WAS MADE BY FOREIGN OFFICE ORALLY WHEN MATTER FIRST BROKE IN
PRESS YESTERDAY, THOUGH ONLY PICKED UP BY NACION. MOREOVER,
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NONE OF THE STORIES IN THE PRESS HAVE INCLUDED KEY POINTS THAT
SUBMISSION OF THE CONTROVERSIAL MEMORANDA WAS (A) REQUESTED AND
(B) REQUESTED SPECIFICALLY BY THE THEN PRESIDENT OF THE
CHAMBER, RAUL LASTIRI, WHO IS NOW PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT.

(AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, EMBASSY HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO KEEP HIS NAME OUT OF THIS MATTER.) THE FACT THAT THE GOA BY ITS SILENCE ON THESE POINTS IS PERMITTING, IF NOT ENCOURAGING, THIS MATTER TO BE PLAYED OUT IN PUBLIC IN A MANNER THAT COMPLETELY DISTORTS AND MISREPRESENTS A PERFECTLY NORMAL DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE OF REPRESENTATIONS IN BEHALF OF NATIONAL INTERESTS RAISES A SERIOUS QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THIS EPISODE IS BEING USED BY SOME ELEMENTS IN THE GOA FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES UNCONNECTED WITH AND DISPROPORTIONATE TO THE INCIDENT INVOLVED. I AM DEEPLY DISTURBED THAT THE GOA ACTIONS MAY PORTEND AN EFFORT TO EXPLOIT U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES AND EVEN TO INHIBIT FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS BY THE EMBASSY IN THE FUTURE WHEN U.S. INTERESTS ARE ENDANGERED.

4. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I WISH TO SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDER DESIRABILITY OF HAVING THE ARGENTINE CHARGE CALLED IN PROMPTLY BY A HIGH-RANKING DEPARTMENTAL OFFICER, PERHAPS DEPUTY SECRETARY, TO DISCUSS U.S. PREOCCUPATION OVER THE GOA'S HANDLING OF THIS MATTER. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OFFICER EXPRESS REGRET OVER THIS UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT IN U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS, BUT THAT HE THEN POINT OUT THAT THE USG IS AWARE, AS GOA MUST BE, THAT THE MEMORANDA WERE SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, WHICH HE WOULD PREFER NOT BE NAMED AT THIS POINT (IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT LASTIRI'S NAME NOT REPEAT NOT BE MENTIONED ON THIS OCCASION), THAT THE CHARGE HAS ADEQUATELY EXPLAINED THE INTENTION OF THE MEMORANDA, AND HAS ALREADY APOLOGIZED FOR ANY OFFENSE TO WHICH A HASTY TRANSLATION MAY HAVE GIVEN RISE, THAT IN ANY CASE THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHARGE WERE FULLY IN ACCORD WITH ACCEPTED DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES AS FOR EXAMPLE GOA REPRESENTATIONS TO USG OVER SUGAR QUOTAS AND MORE RECENTLY STEEL SCRAP EXPORT QUOTAS, AND THAT THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD STATED TO THE CHARGE ON JULY 26 THAT THE MATTER WAS CONSIDERED TERMINATED BY THE GOA. THE STATE OFFICER MIGHT THEN SAY THAT IN THIS SITUATION THE GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S. IS PUZZLED AND PREOCCUPIED BY THE EXAGGERATED AND DISPROPORTIONATE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MINOR INCIDENT IS BEING ALLOWED TO DEVELOP IN ARGENTINA WITH EFFECTS THAT CAN ONLY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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DETERRIMENTAL TO THE CORDIAL RELATIONS WHICH THE USG HAS EARNESTLY HOPED TO MAINTAIN WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA.

5. IN WEIGHING THIS SUGGESTION, AN IMPORTANT FACTOR MUST BE ITS PROBABLE RECEPTION HERE IF ACTED UPON. OUR THOUGHT IS THAT AN OFFICIAL EXPRESSION OF CONCERN AT HIGH LEVELS MIGHT GIVE PAUSE TO THOSE WHO SEEM BENT ON EXAGGERATING AND DISTORTING THIS MATTER. GOA STILL HAS OPPORTUNITY TO TREAT INCIDENT AS CLOSED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS STATEMENT ON JULY 26. IF IT NOW CHOOSES TO ALLOW MATTER TO BE PUSHED (OR ITSELF PUSH) TO EXTREMES CURRENTLY RUMORED, IT CAN ONLY SIGNIFY A CALCULATED DECISION TO EXPLOIT IT FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES FOR U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS. I AM NOT

SANGUINE THAT THIS SUGGESTION WILL ALTER COURSE OF EVENTS,
IF THAT DECISION HAS IN FACT BEEN TAKEN, BUT IT WILL MAKE CLEAR
THAT USG IS FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE ARTIFICIALITY OF THE ISSUE
AND DISAPPROVES OF WHAT IS GOING ON.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DOCUMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BUENOS05642
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 XGDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750008-1730
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqceelr.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: BUENOS AIRES 5635; BUENOS AIRES 5641
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <06-Feb-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EMBASSY MEMORANDA CONTROVERSY
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, US, AR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005